DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 257 916 UD 024 276

TITLE Effective Practices for Successful Bilingual Parent Involvement Programs: An Administrator's Handbook. P.T.M. No. 400.20.

INSTITUTION New Jersey State Dept. of Education, Trenton. Div. of Compensatory/Bilingual Education.

PUB DATE Aug 84

NOTE 50p.

PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Administrator Guides; Administrator Role; *Bilingual Education Programs; Educational Objectives; *Educational Strategies; Elementary Secondary Education; English (Second Language); Hispanic Americans; Limited English Speaking; Needs Assessment; *Parent Participation; Parent Role; *Parent School Relationship; *Program Development; Program Evaluation; Resource Materials; Student Needs

IDENTIFIERS *New Jersey; *Parental Involvement Program

ABSTRACT

This handbook provides information to New Jersey school district administrators for developing involvement programs for the parents of children of limited English proficiency. First, the benefits of parent involvement, and the roles of educators and parents are outlined. Then, a philosophy and rationale for parent involvement is presented, and suggestions are given for setting goals and developing programs around identified needs. Advice on communicating with parents is provided, and effective parent involvement strategies are outlined. Several recent efforts in New Jersey to establish parent involvement programs are described, and the importance of evaluating programs is asserted. And finally, these resource materials are included: a possible schedule of meetings and other parent activities; a sample meeting notification letter; a sample meeting agenda; a sample questionnaire and sample worksheet for conducting a needs assessment; two planning guides; a list of possible topics to be covered at parent meetings; a checklist for arranging a meeting; procedures for conducting a meeting; a sample school visit record for parents; and a checklist for evaluating a parent involvement program. (KH)

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EFFECTIVE PRACTICES FOR SUCCESSFUL BILINGUAL PARENT INVOLVEMENT PROGRAMS:

An Administrator's Handbook

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Effective Practices for Successful Bilingual Parent Involvement Programs: An Administrator's Handbook

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Acknowledgements

The Division of Compensatory/Bilingual Education gratefully acknowledges the efforts of Linda Dold-Collins, the principal author of this handbook. Other contributors include Anthony Dellaira and Linnea Weiland. Fred Carrigg coordinated the editing and the completion of the document.

This manual is a product of the Division of Compensatory/Bilingual Education.

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INTRODUCTION

The New Jersey Bilingual Education Act (N.J.S.A. Title 18A, Chapter 197) calls for the "maximum practicable involvement of parents" in the development and review of programs of bilingual and English as a second language (ESL) education. In addition, those districts with bilingual programs must establish formal parent advisory committee.

As research has demonstrated, effective parental involvement in a child's educational program, at home and in the school, increases student achievement. Among the results of better home-school communication, we can anticipate mutual respect and trust between parents and teachers, a better understanding on the part of culturally different parents of the function of American schools and better behaved and more goal oriented children.

Although districts strive to comply with law and regulation, district administrators often find it difficult to develop an effective parental involvement program for parents of children of limited English proficiency. Effective parental involvement programs are not developed rapidly, but rather evolve from a base of established informal communication lines and a cooperative planning process.

Important to creating this type of involvement is an understanding of the community which the district wishes to reach. Many parents of limited English proficient (LEP) students come from cultural backgrounds in which the school is revered; others view the school as an authoritarian institution. In both cases, they are often reluctant to advise educators as to how to conduct their business.

We must also be sensitive to the fact that these parents are not only faced with a new educational system, but also with a new language and culture. Very often before an active parent advisory committee can be established, the district will first have to orient parents to this new educational, linguistic and social system.

This handbook explores the benefits for educators, parents and children when an effective parental involvement program is established. It includes goals, priorities and strategies for administrators and teachers in achieving successful programs. Pragmatic tips for establishing communication, interaction, and active involvement of parents are offered.

We trust you will find this handbook useful in enhancing home-school relationships.

EDUCATORS AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parent involvement in education is encouraged not only by state law, but also as a part of good educational practice. As educators we are trained well in the areas of curriculum development, instructional methods and techniques, and how to relate to children. Nevertheless, our training does not often touch upon how we are to interact with parents or what benefits can be derived from this type of interaction. There are many benefits for educators and children when parents interact with the school.

Benefits for Educators and Children

- Good curricula are developed around the experiences the child brings to the school. Through interacting with the parents, we can find out more about what the experiences of the children are, and thus, can develop better curricula.

- The most important people in the life of school age children are their parents and teachers. Establishing good relationships with the parents will help teachers to form a stronger bond and to establish a better rapport with the children.

- When parents are brought into the school, they tend to "buy into" the system and lend it more support.

- Students of involved parents have higher achievement and are more involved in school activities.

- Children have a more positive attitude towards school when their parents are involved in school activities.

- Children whose parents are involved in school are more goal oriented.

Role of Educators

Parents and school personnel are partners in the education of children. The responsibilities of administrators and teachers who are involved in this partnership are a function of their specific roles.

District Administrator - The administrator must develop and implement processes which assure that home and school personnel participate in the process. To accomplish this task close teacher/parent communication must be fostered, teacher/parent training must be implemented and a direct line of communication between the school system and parents must be established.

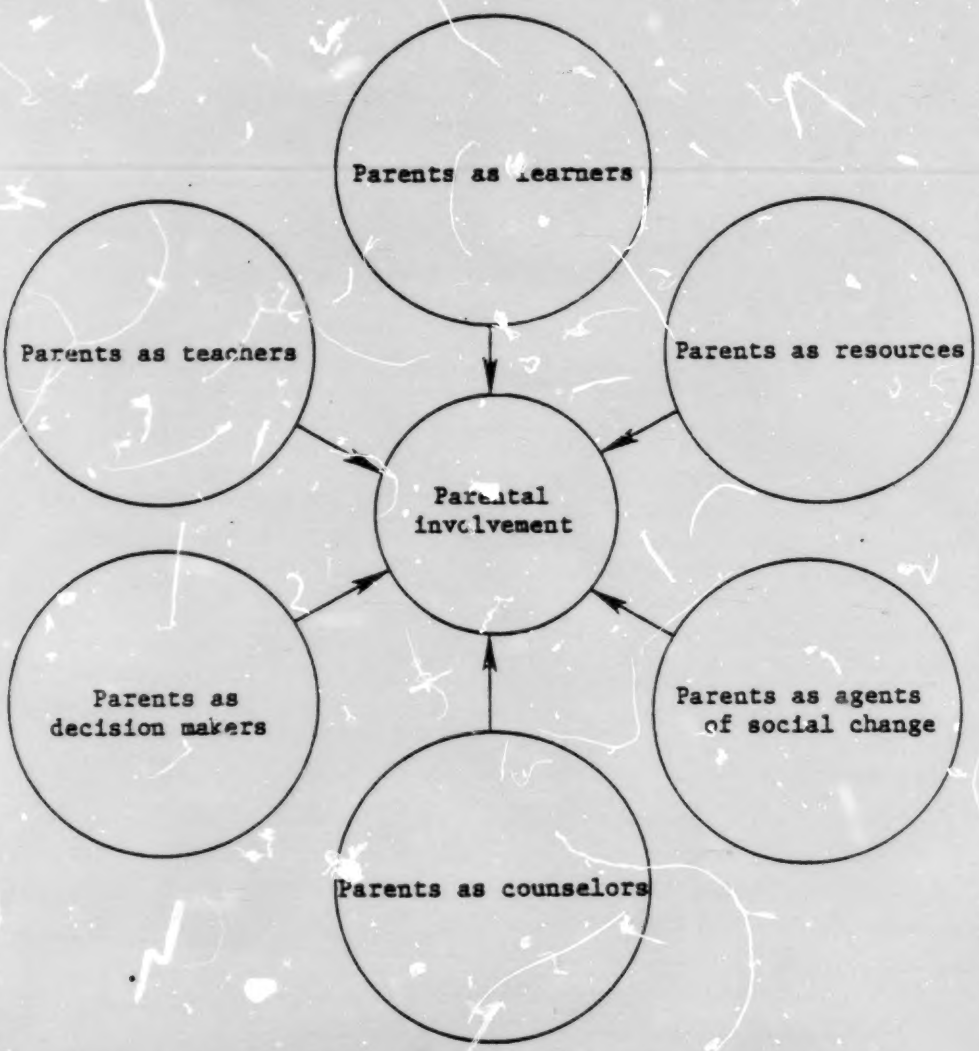
Teachers - Although well-trained to interact with students, teachers must acquire new interpersonal skills when dealing with parents. The role of the teacher in developing a parent involvement program is critical. It is the teacher who can provide the best information to the parent about what takes place in the classroom and how the child is working in the classroom. It is also with the teacher that the parent most often meets.

In speaking of the teacher, who is involved with parents Coletta states:

> "...she perceives herself as not only an educator of children, but as a catalyst of human development; one who models, inspires and supports constructive activities and interactions between parents and their children. She listens actively, accepts and clarifies feelings and ideas, informs when necessary, and confronts problem behavior without increasing the difficulty of causing parental defensiveness and hostility." (Coletta, p. 24)

Role of Parents

Parents play many roles related to the education of their children. The figure below identifies the various roles parents can actively play in the education of their children.



- Parents as Learners: This approach seeks to provide training to parents to increase educational experiences in the home environment for the child in areas related to success in school. The parents develop their own competencies while at the same time they learn viable ways to help their child in school. In the case of parents of limited English proficient children, training should orient parents to the new community, the school system and the new language.

- Parents as Teachers: This approach focuses on the fact that parents are the child's first teachers. Special training and education are given to parents so that they become a means of working with the child at home to foster good study habits.

- Parents as Resources: This approach uses parents as a resource with special talents and skills in the actual classroom situation. It increases communication between the parents and the school, and the school's responsiveness to the local needs of the community.

- Parents as Decision Makers: Parents participate in the whole educational process from the needs assessment and program planning to the evaluation of the entire program.

- Parents as Agents of Social Change: Parents work with agencies outside the school to help them attain the goal of home-school partnership.

- Parents as Counselors: Parents provide emotional support to their children in setting goals and in understanding the role of the American school system.

PLANNING FOR PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Viable parent involvement does not occur spontaneously. There must be careful planning for the development of an effective parental involvement component. This process includes:

- Establishing a philosophy or rationale;
- Setting goals; and
- Developing programs around identified needs.

Philosophy and Rationale for Parental Involvement

For a parental involvement program to be effective, there must be a strong commitment on the part of school staff and program administrators. The program should be developed with the underlying realization that parental involvement is of benefit not only to educators and parents, but also to the children.

For bilingual programs, parental involvement is particularly important. By forming strong linkages with the linguistic minority community served, the school expresses a tacit support for the languages and culture of the community. Cummins has shown that when schools reinforce the cultural identity of minority children and include an instructional program that provides for skill development in the native language and English, "minority students experience academic success and develop high English literacy skills" (Cummins p. 35-36). This fact alone highlights the need for a strong parental involvement component in bilingual education.

Setting Goals

The administrative code for bilingual education requires that parents be informed about the district's program which serves their children, and that they have input in the program's development.

INVOLVEMENT IN PROGRAM

> The board shall provide for the maximum practicable involvement of parents of children of limited English-speaking ability in the development and review of program objectives and dissemination of information to and from the local school districts and communities served by the bilingual education program within existing state law. (NJSA 18A:35-22)
>
> Each district shall provide for the maximum practicable involvement of parents of pupils of limited English speaking ability in the development and the review of program objectives; and dissemination of information to and from the local school districts and communities served by the bilingual or ESL education program. (NJAC 6:31-1.14(a))

Parent Advisory Committee

Each school district implementing a bilingual education program shall

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establish a parent advisory committee on bilingual education of which the majority will be parents of pupils of limited English speaking ability.

The parent advisory committee shall be convened a minimum of four times per school year. (NJAC 6:31-1.14(b) and (c))

Opportunities for input should be included among the district's goals. Nevertheless, before being able to attain this goal, interim goals may call for establishing informal communications between the home and school. Establishing a viable parent involvement program may be incremental.

Another important goal is that of forming a bridge between the child's home and the learning experiences offered by the school. The home provides children with the ideal environment for learning during the first five years of their lives. During this formative time, children internalize their parents' culture, value system and language. They are slowly formulating a self-concept using their parents' culture and values as both a guide and measuring stick. As children enter the school, it is important for teachers to have a firm understanding of the importance of this relationship (International Reading Association; 1980). Building on the home experiences of the child insures that a viable curriculum is developed.

When limited English proficient children come to school they are faced with a new language and culture. The program developed by the district should acknowledge and accept the learning and experiences the child brings to the school in order to facilitate the transition to learning in the new language and culture. It is essential to know about the community in order to better appreciate the base that is being built upon. To do this the school must establish communication with the parents. The school staff must know what kinds of experiences the child brings to the school, as well as the parents' expectations for their children in the school setting. Therefore, a primary goal is to assess pre-school environment and parental aspirations for their children.

Developing Programs Around Identified Needs

When conducting your assessment of the community and planning for parent involvement, certain key factors should be considered:

- Language groups to be served;
- Cultural values and practices of the different linguistic groups;
- Age group of parents;
- Length of time parents are planning to stay in the community;
- Work schedules of the parents;
- Key community leaders;
- Community's attitude about getting involved in school; and
- Needs of the parents.

Objectives must be based upon identified needs. One key element for success is flexibility in adapting to different situations. Some considerations which may shape your program, along with examples of possible alternatives for adapting to these needs, are examined in this section.

Language Groups Served

Essential to an effective parental involvement component is communication. The key communicator who conducts meetings must be able to speak the parents' language and dialect.

If several languages are served within a community, then either separate meetings may be conducted or special language subcommittees should be established. To ensure that the subcommittees deal with the same issues, a representative from each subcommittee should also serve on a general district advisory committee.

Cultural Values and Practices of Different Linguistic Groups

A minimal knowledge of the various cultures of the parents is essential to avoid unintentional cultural conflicts. For example, planning a parent advisory committee meeting on Jose Marti Day (January 28th) or Cuban Independence Day (May 20th) is sure to result in poor attendance in a Cuban neighborhood, unless the meeting is advertised as a celebration of the holiday.

A bilingual program for the Russian Jewish community would need to watch the Jewish calendar for holy days (Simihas Torah in the Spring) which do not have a fixed date on the Western calendar.

Age Groups of Parents

If parents fall primarily between the ages of 18-30, they probably have younger children at home. To get young parents out to meetings, you may want to provide babysitting services for the young children. These parents may also be more interested in having training sessions which focus on child development and parenting techniques.

Length of Time Parents Are Planning to Stay in the Community

If the community served is highly mobile, your objectives will have to be short-term. One area that you may want to address if parents expect to move within a few months is what to look for in a new school and what documents they should have when enrolling their children in the new school. The importance of transferring documents to the new school district is essential in avoiding duplicity of student assessment.

Work Schedules of the Parents

Meetings should be held when the parents can attend. If parents work during the day, then meetings should be planned for the evening. In other cases, parents may be home during the day and find it more convenient to come to meetings at the beginning or end of the school day. Mothers of younger children are often home during the day. Elementary school meetings might be held immediately after school when mothers come to pick up their children.

Community Leaders

In order to reach the parents, it sometimes helps to identify community leaders who can sometimes be more effective in getting parents involved than school officials. Very often local clergy are also community leaders who will be supportive of the school's efforts. Many linguistic communities have native language newspapers. Usually, they are happy to publicize school meetings which affect their community. There are other leaders also. Is there a social club or organization? Identifying leaders in these groups is often effective and can be one step toward moving into full parent involvement.

One district had difficulty achieving parental involvement because the parents worked several jobs. On weekends or odd times off, parents went to the local social club. The administrator visited the club, identified the "leaders" there, and provided them with information about the bilingual program. The district was later able to bring the parents into the schools during the mornings between shifts and evolved an effective parent involvement program.

Community's Attitude Toward Getting Involved in the Schools

As mentioned in the introduction, parents often feel a deep reverence toward the school. The teacher is a very respected professional, and some parents feel they have no right to comment on school activities. In other cases, the parents may feel insecure because the school is seen as a threatening, authoritarian institution. Parents of limited English proficient children do not usually speak English. Communication to the home must include information as to school personnel who speak the language of the parents. In both cases, the school may plan to visit the home or hold first meetings in private homes, social clubs, or churches. The familiar atmosphere in the home or church will make parents feel more comfortable and less threatened. Obviously, the objective is to make the parents comfortable in the school, helping them to know more about the school so they can become partners in education.

Needs of the Parents

Once parents have been contacted and school representatives have had an opportunity to get to know them, the program staff should ascertain the parents' needs and expectations. The parental involvement component may evolve in different ways depending upon this assessment. Flexibility is a key for developing a viable parental involvement component. If parents have different needs, then special subcommittees which address these special needs should be formed. Training for some subcommittees can be conducted by parents who have had prior training and are more sophisticated in interacting with schools.

COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS

Communication with parents occurs informally as well as formally. The educator must be prepared to respond appropriately in all situations to the parents of limited English proficient students.

Informal Communication With Parents

Very often parents of limited English proficient students will escort their younger children to school and come for them at the end of the day to take them home again. This provides teachers and school building administrators with an excellent opportunity to meet, greet and get to know the parents informally. By greeting them informally, teachers and school principals can make the parents feel comfortable and welcome in the school. This also will dispel the parents' reluctance to come to school personnel when they have concerns or questions. By building this bridge, more formal parent-school communications can be established.

When reaching out to parents, verbal communication is usually more effective than written. Parents from other cultures often are not accustomed to receiving the barrage of notes and papers from the school that we tend to send. For communicating with parents from other cultural backgrounds, personal, verbal communications are usually more effective. When planning meetings, a phone call is suggested. Written notes should be sent both in English and the native language. Keep in mind the protocol of the particular cultural group.

Language Resources

The principal should develop a language resource list of the staff. Teachers, aides and other staff may have facility in another language that may go untapped. Other community language resource people should also be identified and a listing of these resource people should be kept on hand in the office and updated periodically. Native language resource people can help school personnel gather relevant and important information about the enrolling students.

A word of caution is necessary. Although a person who speaks the native language of the parents can and should assist at registration, principals should be judicious when pulling teachers out of the classroom. Obviously, if teachers are constantly pulled from the classroom to assist the central office, the main task of providing educational services to the children is pushed aside. In schools where there is a sizable non-English speaking enrollment, efforts should be made to hire or enlist the assistance of a clerk, community liaison or community aide who speaks this language. This ensures that teachers and other instructional staff are not frequently called out of their classrooms. Identifying community leaders and volunteers who are willing to help is advised.

Registration

The first contact parents have with the school is at the time they enroll their children in the school. All staff in the building should make the parents feel comfortable in the school. The school secretary or

attendance clerk, should be pleasant and make the parent feel welcome when enrolling the child. It should be remembered that the parent often comes to the school with as many apprehensions as the child. A parent who does not speak English may feel strange and disoriented when coming to a new community, and the first impressions the parent has of the school may be generalized to the community at large.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

The parent-teacher conference is perhaps one of the most important contacts the school has with parents. It provides the parent and teacher with the opportunity to share information about the individual student, and discuss their expectations for the child.

This conference should be a positive meeting. Even if a child has difficulty mastering a particular skill or set of skills, there certainly are talents or special qualities that the teacher can build upon in the classroom. These positive aspects should be discussed in the parent-teacher conference. Parents have a special love for their children and want their children to be accepted. Parents recognize and take pride in the special talents and personality traits, as well as note any particular difficulties a child may have. Again, remember the importance of specific cultural backgrounds. Most Hispanic parents will give their greatest attention to their child's deportment in school. Perhaps this is the common ground to serve as a starting point since it is a shared value between the parent and the teacher. Whenever speaking of academic performance, teachers should have specific examples of the child's work to show. If the teacher does not speak the language of the parents, then a key communicator must be identified for discussion to be meaningful.

Although the parent-teacher conference is very important, it is often a neglected area of a teacher's training. The school should conduct in-service training in this area for its staff. This is the time for parents and teachers to share information about the child. The parent also should know the purpose of parent-teacher conferences and receive training from district personnel in this area. The parent may want to have a list of questions to ask at this time.

Meetings and Other Formal Communications

Having established good communication on a one-to-one basis makes other formal school-parent communicative situations easier. Nevertheless, the parents may not be ready to act in an advisory capacity. Remember, a group meeting is even more threatening than a one-to-one meeting with the teacher.

EFFECTIVE PARENT INVOLVEMENT STRATEGIES

1. Breaking the Language Barrier

A good idea is to compile lists of school personnel by building who are bilingual. Include the language(s) they speak. Distribute this to the children the first week of school. Send all school notices concerning registration, meetings, events etc. to local native language newspapers. Signs can be placed in local food stores and shops frequented by the target community.

2. Orientation to American Schools

Holding an open house is one of the best ways to introduce parents to the school. Invite parents to come to the school to become familiar with it and see what is going on in the classes. Encourage them to visit the bilingual and the ESL classes, so they can see how the program promotes the development of English language skills as well as basic skills. Parents should also be encouraged to tour the whole school, so they can see all facilities.

3. School Visits

Parent visits should be scheduled for special events held on specific days. These visits may coincide with holidays of cultural importance not usually celebrated by Anglo-American schools. A cultural night in the school is also effective. Invite parents to see their children perform or have the parents contribute to a special program by bringing a favorite ethnic dish. Parents respond to their children's enthusiasm for a special program. Having parents contribute something special from the home fosters good feelings about native culture. Sharing and enjoying food always brings people together. Of course, parents should be encouraged to visit the school whenever possible. A well-publicized visitation policy promotes a sense of partnership and pride in the school.

4. Informational Meetings

Meetings can provide parents with essential information about available community services. In addition, information about cultural differences of which the parent may not be aware should be provided. Concepts such as the importance of punctuality in American society, appropriate dress for New Jersey's climate, legal requirements and freedoms should be addressed.

Districts may find that parents want information on specific areas of need such as English as a second language (ESL) programs and job training programs. Before duplicating existing training

programs in this area, check with your adult education programs. Many districts and communities have adult learning centers where these programs are already available.

5. Child Development and Parent Training Activities

Since children learn daily from interacting with their parents, it would be helpful if parents could receive formal training in promoting learning. Parents affect their children's growth and development by:

- the way they communicate with their children;
- the variety and meaning of the experiences they provide for their children; and
- the way they guide their children in developing skills in relating to other people.

A parent training component can focus on ways that this interaction can be positive and contribute to school success.

School officials may wish to establish an ESL program for parents. Program planners should realize that learning a second language takes a considerable amount of time. Thus, effective ESL instruction must be provided on a regular basis. The goals of the project should be clearly defined for the parents. The parents' learning of English sets a good example for the children. It also promotes a better understanding for the parent of the child's school experiences. Parents should be encouraged to continue the use of the native language in the home, while English language skills are being developed.

Parents should be provided with suggestions for learning activities that they can carry out in the home. At the same time, the skills reinforced by such activities and their importance for the children's learning should be discussed.

Parent training can address the values of American and other cultures. The American culture encourages children to become more independent at an earlier age than does the Hispanic culture. These differences should be discussed openly, so that parents and children are not thrown into a situation which could cause "culture-clash" in the home. This does not imply that the parents should be encouraged to adopt new values and attitudes, but merely that they are aware of and sensitive to the new culture.

6. Parents as Teachers

Another good strategy is to involve parents directly in the school as tutors or classroom aides. Training in this component is much more specialized, as parents develop specific skills to promote learning. Title VII funds are available to districts that would like to draw

upon parents to serve as aides in the school and classrooms. Through this funding source, appropriate training may be provided to parents. Often a goal of this type of project is to train parents so that they might eventually become teachers in the district's bilingual or English as a second language program.

Districts with Title VII funds are not the only ones that may call on parents to serve as instructional aides in the classroom. Parents may be asked to help in the classroom as volunteers. Volunteer programs should be explored more closely by district administrators. If the district does decide to go in this direction, training is needed for parents and teachers. Parents may become frustrated when they come into the schools to serve as teacher aides, if the teacher has not been trained on how to use the parents' services effectively.

In some school districts, parents are called upon to help develop curriculum materials about the children's native culture. Parents have also been asked to help teachers plan lessons dealing with native culture. Most parents are glad to bring in pictures and artifacts from their native land. They can also be called upon to teach native songs, poems and dances, as well as tell folk tales. This partnership is of mutual benefit to the parents and school.

7. Your First PAC Meeting

The first six activities discussed were ways of introducing the parent to the benefits of the school system. Making the transition from recipient of services to active planner and decision maker may be frightening. Part of your work has already been accomplished through some of the first six activities. Participating parents have been attending group activities. To insure good attendance at Parent Advisory Council (PAC) meetings draw upon topics from other strategies already suggested. Your agenda may include:

- Community Services Information (where to, how to, etc.)
- Social Event(s) (Eugenio de Hostos presentations by students, etc.)
- Student Awards Programs (poster contest, native language spelling bees, etc.)
- Getting to Know You Meeting (key bilingual school personnel describe their functions)
- Goals of Bilingual Program

These initial meetings should be held at the local schools. From these parents, a central PAC can be selected and organized.

8. Formal Parental Involvement

Although the prior training of parents may increase their level of involvement on a parent advisory committee, they will need more training to become effective members of the advisory committee.

First, parents should be trained in the area of parliamentary procedures. Training should also address:

- How does a committee function?
- What is the role of a member?
- How are meetings conducted?
- What is expected of a committee member?
- Is attendance important?
- What information can and should be made available to them?
- What kinds of recommendations and contributions can they make?
- How does the committee's work interface with the district wide school system?

These issues and topics are not simple ones. Even the district administrator may need further understanding and training in the area of parliamentary procedures and committee work. There is a large amount of information available in this area. For further information, consult your local or school library.

Once the advisory committee is established and members understand their role, they must be involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the bilingual and ESL program. In order to advise the district administrators in these areas, parents must have the proper information with which to work. The district's parent advisory committee should know:

- the goals of the program;
- federal and/or state regulations;
- who the children to be served are;
- the identification process and in what schools/classes they are placed;
- instructional techniques recommended as good professional practice;
- the organization of the program and services available;
- courses available at the secondary level;
- supplemental and auxiliary services available to program participants;
- evaluation results;
- curricular expectations for the children in various courses and grade levels.

The advisory committee may identify their own concerns and discussion topics. District administrators may give them certain topics for consideration. Parents can discuss and advise on matters such as the appropriateness of certain materials, particularly those in the native language, their involvement in the development of ISIPs, evaluation of the program and variables that affect the evaluation design.

Given the opportunity and training needed the parent advisory committee can become a viable force in developing an effective program of bilingual/ESL education.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN NEW JERSEY

In Atlantic City

When starting the parent involvement program in Atlantic City, Jose Almanza, the district's bilingual coordinator, said, "We wanted the parents to know that we were willing to serve as a resource for them, as well as, calling upon the parents to serve as a resource for us. Each spring when planning for the next school year, the parents meet informally with the coordinator to discuss their needs, and the types of services they would like the district to provide to them. The approach taken is: how can we help you, we want to assist you."

In response to parents' requests the district has provided extensive training to parents on a variety of topics. Resource people from all spheres of the community have come to meetings to tell parents firsthand what services they offer and how parents can avail themselves of these services. Fire, police and local health care agencies have met with Atlantic City's bilingual parents. This year, the parents have indicated they want to know more about family life education, drug prevention and available local health services. Training provided now focuses more closely on parenting skills and curricula in the schools.

A key element in evolving this project is establishing personalized communications with the parents. One-to-one communication with individual parents is an integral part of overall communications. When students do something special or noteworthy, Jose Almanza calls the parents to let them know. Likewise, if there is a family problem, such as an illness, he also takes the time to let the parents know that he and the school personnel care. As Mr. Almanza expressed it: "This calls for a small investment of time on the part of the program administrator but it yields great returns."

The other critical factor in Atlantic City's parent involvement program is having a full-time community coordinator. Because the coordinator has her roots in the community, she knows how to relate to the parents. She has let the parents know that she is available to assist them at all times. Because frequent communication is important to the parent involvement program, the district has made the commitment to have a full-time community coordinator. As Mr. Almanza has said, "She's the one who really knocks on the doors."

The program which was developed in response to parents' requests has garnered parental support for the bilingual program. The success of the program is demonstrated through the other roles the parents have moved into: parents now volunteer their services to the schools and serve as resource persons in the classrooms. They also participate in an advisory capacity.

In Franklin School, Newark

As with Atlantic City, the key to the success of Franklin School's parental involvement component is having established a school atmosphere in which the parents feel welcome. Charles Mitchel, the school principal, has worked hard to develop this. As Mr. Mitchel stated, "The school must develop a relationship of trust with the community. This doesn't happen by accident."

Mr. Mitchel has established a good relationship with the community in a number of ways. When he first came to the school, he identified and met with key community leaders to find out what he could do to bring them into the school. At that time, one parent suggested that the school itself needed to be cleaned up. The graffiti on the exterior of the school seemed to reflect a lack of caring about the community. With that suggestion, Mr. Mitchel set aside four weekends during which the entire exterior of the school was painted. The paint was donated by stores from the community and the parents did the work themselves.

Periodically, Mr. Mitchel holds what he calls "living room dialogues." He calls key community leaders, offers to bring refreshments if they will invite a few other parents to their home to sit and discuss their concerns and what the school can do for the community. Mr. Mitchel stresses that key community leaders need not be parents of children enrolled in the school, but they are the key to reaching out to the parents.

At the beginning of each school year, Mr. Mitchel also contacts the pastors of the various churches in the community. He asks the pastors if he can speak to the congregation briefly, just to let them know who he is, and that the school is there to serve the community.

Another successful strategy for reaching parents is the sponsorship of an annual health fair. This activity is held at the school and thus, brings the parents into the school.

Not only has the school reached out to parents, but a firm partnership has been established. At the beginning of each school year, an open house is held. Parents meet with the teachers to openly discuss both the parents' and the schools' expectations for the children. Teachers at that time let the parents know that they will be held accountable for meeting their expectations, if the parents in turn meet their responsibilities. If children do not come to school or if they are late everyday, then the teachers cannot be held accountable for the expectations listed by the parents for their children. Conversely, however, if the parents insure that they meet their responsibilities, then the teachers may be held accountable.

All of this has led to a higher level of parent involvement. The school is involved in a special cross-cultural Title VII demonstration project.

Through this project, parents have been directly involved in curriculum development. Parents have been involved in intensive training sessions (two two-hour workshops per month), have contributed to and actively participated in curriculum development, as well as, serve as advisors to the project directors. The continuation grant proposal was revised significantly due to parental input. (The original grant proposed to serve children in grades K through 3, and expand to grades 4 - 6 inclusive the second year of the project. At the parents' recommendation, however, the project was only expanded to include grade 4 in the second year, so that a wider parameter of evaluation results could be studied to truly test the instructional impact of the program.)

In Plainfield

Nilda Macarrelli, bilingual coordinator for Plainfield schools, believes "Parents who are involved have the children with the best grades and who are the most active in school activities." Therefore, Plainfield has worked hard at developing parental support and active participation in the bilingual program.

Having developed and then been awarded a Title VII grant entitled "Bilingual Parent Resource Project," Plainfield has established a variety of training programs and activities for parents. Scheduled both during the day and evening, Plainfield offers workshops on basic skills for parents as tutors of their children, health and family life training, ESL classes, and Parent In-Evaluation (PIE). PIE trains parents to be active agents of social change by providing them with the necessary skills to evaluate the success of the Plainfield bilingual program. Parents also serve as tutors and resource personnel in instruction in the schools.

Nilda Macarrelli notes it's difficult to get parents to become involved at first. To enhance attendance at Parent Advisory Committee meetings, parents are contacted by phone and receive a reminder note in the mail. PAC agendas include Pot Luck Dinners, social events and celebrations like the Mother's Day Meeting. Children sing songs, dance and make presentations at meetings. The end result is an active PAC which is worth the hard work involved.

EVALUATION OF THE PARENT INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM

Just as with the other components of your educational program, there must be evaluation of the parental involvement component to determine the extent to which identified needs have been met.

The evaluation of the parent involvement project should not only tally the number of meetings held and the number of parents in attendance, but should also include input from the parents regarding their perceptions of the program and how it met their needs. Input should also be solicited on how to improve the program.

The evaluation will not only demonstrate the effectiveness of the project, but will serve as a needs assessment for the next year. As parents increase their involvement, they may move from one role to another as indicated earlier. With this shift in roles, the training provided and the activities planned will also change.

A Final Indicator of Success

As schools prepare children to move upward within the school's program, the ultimate goal is to prepare children to operate in the world at large. Likewise, an ultimate goal of the district's parent involvement program is to help the parent out of the school forum and into the world at large to become an agent of social change.

An agent of social change is an active citizen who exercises the right to vote and voices concerns and opinions to elected representatives. An agent of social change can influence legislators by writing letters to express feelings about certain issues.

The program administrator should encourage and help parents write letters to legislators about certain educational issues that are important to them. As parents become more involved in educational and political issues, they may want to invite their legislative representatives and other community representatives to speak to the group to discuss matters of interest and concern to them.

0133h

SELECTED RESOURCES

Possible Schedule of Meetings and Other Parent Activities

September - October

Non-formal meetings, orientation sessions, distribution of written information to parents, begin ESL instruction for parents, school visits, etc.

Late October - November

Local parent meetings by school - meet the staff night, goals of bilingual education, welcome to (your city) orientation, Puerto Rican Discovery Day

November - December

First district-wide meeting - Holiday season theme, community services, alumni night (former bilingual students talk about benefits of bilingual education), district program is discussed

January - February

Eugenio de Hostos or Jose Marti night, participating students make presentations, PAC reviews current program and makes recommendations re: possible changes for next year

March - April

Pan American night, cultural events, international bazaar, PAC discusses plan for next year and makes recommendations

May - June

Awards night for students, next year's plan is presented to PAC and approved or revised again

Sample Meeting Notification Letter

October _____, 19__

Dear Parent(s) of _____,

As the Director of Bilingual/ESL programs for (your city) Public Schools, I am happy to invite you to our first district-wide meeting of parents of children in the bilingual/ESL program sponsored by the (your city) Parent Advisory Council (PAC). The meeting will take place at _____ School at _____ p. m. on November _____, 19 ___. Since Puerto Rican Discovery Day is November 19th, we will take this opportunity to celebrate by having bilingual program students discuss the importance of this date as well as presenting songs and dances of Puerto Rico.

At the same time, district administrators and I will discuss services available to you, the goals and benefits of (your city) Bilingual Program and the role of you and your child(ren) in the schools.

Hope to see you there.

Sincerely,

Director, Bilingual Program

Sample Meeting Agenda
(First District-Wide Meeting)

1. Welcome by Bilingual Director
2. Introductions of Board Members and Administrators
3. Cultural Event - Puerto Rican Discovery Day
   a. Presentation by Juan _____, 5th grade, _____ School
   b. Songs by Mrs. Garcia's first grade bilingual class
   c. Presentation by Jose Vasquez, seventh grade ESL
   d. Typical Puerto Rican dances by 5th & 6th grades, _____ School
4. Call the meeting to order
5. Presentation by District Coordinator on services offered LEP students
6. Questions/Answers
7. Adjourn Meeting

CONDUCTING YOUR NEEDS ASSESSMENT

In this section you will find a sample questionnaire and sample worksheet for compiling this needs assessment information.

To get the best response from your parent survey, the survey should be conducted via personal interview during a home visit. Again, to communicate effectively the interview should be conducted in the parent's native language.

Parent Survey

SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE

Because we want to provide the best school program possible to your child, we would like to know more about your family, how you feel about the program and the kind of information you would like us to provide about the school. You can help us in this effort by answering the following questions.

Parent Name _____ Spouse _____

Phone _____ Address _____

Children _____ Teacher/Grade _____

_____ Teacher/Grade _____

_____ Teacher/Grade _____

Take the above information from school records.

A. Basic Information Questions

1. Do you have any other children? _____

   - How old are they? _____

2. How long have you lived here? _____

3. Do you work? _____

4. What is the most convenient time for you to visit school or come to a meeting?

TIME AVAILABLE

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Mornings					
Afternoons					
Evenings					

5. In order to participate in parent activities, would you need (check all)

_____ babysitting
_____ transportation
_____ a neighbor to accompany you

B. Bilingual/ESL Program

Do you know what the purpose of the bilingual/ESL program is?	Yes	No
Do you feel the program is helping you child in:		
reading?	Yes	No
mathematics?	Yes	No
English?	Yes	No
Have you ever met with your child's teacher?	Yes	No
Have you ever attended any bilingual/ESL parent meetings?	Yes	No

Total yes responses ____ No responses ____

C. Interests

	YES	NO
Would you be interested in:		
- learning more about the purpose of bilingual education?	___	___

	YES	NO
- knowing more about what your child learns in school?	___	___
- how to help your child with schoolwork?	___	___
- what to ask at a parent-teacher conference?	___	___
- how the American schools are different from your native country's schools?	___	___
- learning more about the district's schools?	___	___
- learning about school decision-making activities?	___	___
- volunteering to help in the classroom?	___	___
- learning about the community resources and services available?	___	___

Would you be willing to do the following:

- come to school to visit your child's classes?	___	___
- come to school for a meeting to learn more about the program?	___	___
- come to school to help in the classroom?	___	___
- participate on a parent advisory committee?	___	___
- talk to other parents about the program?	___	___

Total Yes responses _____
Total No responses _____

Seven or more yes responses is a good indicator for active membership in a PAC.

ASSESSMENT PROFILE

Complete the grid below to ascertain the numbers of interested parents by topics and similarities.

	under 5	5-7	8-11	12-14	15+
Children's Age					

	Pre-K	K	1-5	6-8	9-12
in Grades					

	less than 1 yr.	1-5 yrs.	5-10 yrs.	more than 10 years
Length of Residence				

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Preferred Time for Meeting A.M.					
P.M.					
Even.					

	General Bilingual	Parent as Tutor/ Learner	Community Services	Active Participation in PAC
Interest Areas				

PLANNING GUIDES

Having established needs, objectives designed to meet these needs can be set. You will find two sample planning sheets that can serve as a model for the planning of your parent involvement project.

GOAL: To orient the parents to the American school system

BROAD OBJECTIVES: Parents will become aware of some of the major differences between their native land and the American school system. Special emphasis wil be placed on the importance of the role of parent involvement in American schools.

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES	MATERIALS/RESOURCES
1. Parents will be informed about activities in a regular school day.	Parents will view a slide presentation of several classes participating in a variety of school activities. The objectives of these activities will also be discussed.	Slide presentation, Samples of student work
2. Parents will discuss how schools in U.S. are similar, and also the differences with their native schools.	The parents through discussion will note the differences in structure of programs, focus of activities and increased role of parents interacting with school staff.	Comparative chart
3. Parents will be oriented toward the idea of closer interaction with school staff.	Parents will be informed of their role in education, how increased interaction with the school helps to develop better programs.	Parent handbook, report cards, student folders

GOAL: To encourage parents to reinforce and extend children's native language skills through activities in the home.

BROAD OBJECTIVE: To acquaint parents with the importance of developing strong native language skills, and help them to provide experiences which promote the development of these skills in the home.

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES	MATERIALS/RESOURCES
1. Inform parents of the importance of developing strong native language skills.	Invite parents to a meeting at which discussion will focus on benefits of strong native language skill development, both through demonstration lessons of skill transfer and discussion.	Manipulatives needed for language lesson, tape recorder, fact sheet
2. Identify for parents some games, songs, and play activities that are appropriate for children to promote skills development.	Invite parents to an open house. Parents will be able to review books and records and try out equipment which can be borrowed and used in the home for further native language skill development.	Song sheets, games, books, toys and other manipulatives that can be used in the home
3. Parents will learn and apply basic principle of learning discussed for home activities such as story-reading/ telling.	Present a demonstration of simple activities and story-telling techniques, that employ basic principles that parents can follow in the home.	School library books, pictures, magazines, children's drawings

TOPICS FOR INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

The following pages list some topics that you may want to cover when planning your parent training program and parent meetings.

1. PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Information which the TEACHER can provide to the parent about the child can include:

- information on the child's academic and social behavior at school;
- areas of strength and weakness in various subjects;
- independent and guided work habits;
- personal relationships with teachers and other students;
- self discipline and reaction to teacher authority;
- the child's response to the rules of reward and punishment in school;
- ideas on how the parents can help their children at home with homework or academic problem areas;
- parents' rights, school policy on discipline, lunch, and cafeteria matters, information on different types of programs;
- the need for parental cooperation to help both in and out of the classroom; and
- the important role that parents play in the early learning years.

Information which the PARENT can provide to the teacher about the child can include:

- the activities they do not want their child to participate in;
- how much time is spent with the child and what activities they participate in as a family;
- their expectations for the child at school;
- the type of discipline the child responds to;
- the child's interests and hobbies;
- daily activities, T.V. habits, children's games;
- the child's general behavior at home;

- the child's responsibilities at home; and
- the child's and family's language of the home.

Santa Cruz Bilingual Education Design. A Teacher Training System Component; Parent and Community Involvement. University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona. 1980.

2. ORIENTATION TO THE SCHOOL

Basic Information

- What is the school's telephone number?
- Who is the school principal?
- Who is the child's classroom teacher?
- What time does school begin?
- Is lunch served at school?
- May children go home for lunch?
- What is the school calendar?
- What holidays do the children have?
- What days are half-session days?
- What is the schedule for half-session days?
- What procedures should be followed if a child is absent?
- If parents have a question, who should they contact? How?
- How should parents request a conference with the teacher? With the principal?

The Bilingual Program

- How are children selected for the bilingual program?
- What are the goals of the bilingual program?
- Do the children learn English?
- What is English as a second language?
- What language is used when instructing in reading, mathematics and other subjects?

- How do teachers determine the child's dominant/instructional language?
- What skills should the child master before beginning reading in English?
- What skills should the child master before being placed in the English classroom?

School Policies

- Why is attendance important?
- What are the school's discipline procedures?
- What additional services are provided to children by the school?
  - Counseling?
  - Health screening?
  - Remedial/supplemental instruction?
  - Extra curricular activities?
  - Gifted and talented education?
  - Child study services?
  - Vocational skills training?
- Are parent-teacher conferences scheduled on a regular basis? When?
- What is the purpose of a parent-teacher conference?
- What should the parent ask at a parent-teacher conference?
- What is the school/district's promotion policy?

3. ORIENTATION TO THE COMMUNITY

General Community Services

- How can parents contact the police in an emergency?
- How can parents contact the fire company in an emergency?
- How can parents contact the ambulance service in an emergency?
- In an emergency, what relevant information should parents provide when requesting aid?

- Where is the closest hospital emergency room?
- What is the telephone number of the poison control center?
- What health service agencies are in the community?
- What services do they provide?
- What family counseling services are available?
- How can parents contact local utilities?
- Where are the local municipal offices?
- What services do they provide?
- How can they be contacted?
- What other services are parents interested in knowing more about?

Educational Services

- Where are there daycare centers?
- Where are there nursery schools?
- Does the school have a preschool program?
- How can parents enroll their children in the program?
- Is there a local adult education center?
- Do they have an adult ESL program?
- What job training do they provide?
- What other types of instruction do they offer?
- How can parents enroll?

Cultural Orientation

- How is time orientation in the parents' culture similar to that in the American culture?
- How is time orientation different across cultures?
  - Is punctuality as important in the parents' culture?
  - Is there as much stress on "waiting for one's turn" in the parents' culture?

- How are eye contact "rules" in the parents culture similar to those in the American culture?

- How are they different?

  - Are children expected to look directly at adults when reprimanded? Or are they expected to lower their eyes to show respect?

  - Does sustained eye contact make parents feel uncomfortable?

- Is there a great emphasis placed on developing independence and independent work habits among children in the parents' culture?

- Is there a great emphasis placed on sharing and helping among small children in the parents' culture?

- Is there a greater sense of self-actualization or fatalism in the parent's culture than in the American culture?

  - Do parents view education as a key to social mobility?

- Would certain common gestures or actions in the American culture be considered rude or taboo in the parents' culture?

  - If a teacher touched the top of a child's head would this be offensive?

  - If a teacher crossed his or her leg would this be offensive in the parents' culture?

- How are the personal space "rules" in the parents' culture similar to those in the American culture? How are they different?

  - Do children tend to touch and want to sit very close to adults, including parents and teachers in the parent's culture?

- Is the school and are teachers highly esteemed in the parents' culture?

- Do parents tend to have higher regard and respect for males?

- Do parents tend to disregard the authority position of females due to their cultural background?

- Do parents tend to feel that education is strictly a matter for professional educators and therefore will not ask questions, offer suggestions or participate in school activities?

- If parents are invited to school, will they tend to think automatically that they are being invited to discuss a serious problem related to their children?

CHECKLIST FOR ARRANGING A MEETING

A good meeting requires good planning. The following is a chairperson's checklist for planning meetings. This checklist was developed by the Federal Programs Department in Erie, Pennsylvania and was printed in Working With Schools: A Parents' Handbook (United States Office of Education, 1980).

The next step in planning a good meeting is knowing the rules for conducting an orderly meeting, and insuring that they are followed. The next worksheet prepared by the Title I Office of the Mississippi State Department of Education was also printed in Working With Schools: A Parents' Handbook (USOE, 1980).

CHAIRPERSON'S CHECKLIST FOR MEETINGS

Preliminary Activities

A. Room arrangements

1. Have arrangements been made for a meeting room?
2. Will the room be comfortable?
3. Are there enough chairs?
4. Have arrangements been made for special equipment if needed?
5. If there are handouts, are there enough for everybody?
6. Will notices be sent out in time for people who plan to attend?
7. If needed, is there a telephone committee ready to remind members of the meeting?

B. Program arrangements

1. Has the agenda been prepared and mailed to members?
2. Have speakers been invited to participate?
3. Does the speaker have the time, place, room number for the meeting? Does he or she know how long to talk and how large the group will be?

C. Other activities

1. Have refreshments been planned?
2. Have arrangements for babysitting been made?

The Day of the Meeting

1. Do you plan to arrive early to double check the room, equipment, chairs, and refreshments?

2. Are there signs to direct people to the meeting room?

3. Have you made arrangements for someone to meet and greet the speaker?

4. Will someone greet people when they arrive? Are there name tags?

5. Will you have extra copies of the agenda available?

After the Meeting

1. Will you be available to talk with members? Some hesitate to speak at meetings and have ideas you will want to consider.

2. Will you thank the speaker? A written note is very effective.

3. Have you tidied up the room as much as possible?

4. Will you make arrangements to return any equipment?

Prepared by:

(Federal Programs Department in Erie, PA)

PROCEDURES FOR CONDUCTING A MEETING

There are eight steps that the chairperson should follow in holding a meeting:

1. Call the meeting to order.
2. Hear the minutes of the previous meeting.
3. Hear reports of officers, boards, and standing committees.
4. Hear reports of special committees.
5. Hear announcements.
6. Go on with the unfinished business of the last meeting.
7. Go on to new business.
8. End meeting and adjourn.

How to Make a Motion. A proposal for action is made in the form of a motion. For the council to consider the motion, at least two members must be in favor of it. The first member makes the motion, and the second member seconds the motion to show his or her approval.

This is how a motion is made:

1. Stand and address the chairperson—"Mr. (Ms.) Chairperson." Wait until you are recognized by the chairperson. Do not speak until the chairperson recognizes you by a sign or by name.
2. Be sure you have your motion clearly in mind and worded as briefly as possible.
3. When you have been recognized, state the motion so that all can hear. "I move that ..."
4. After the motion has been made, another member, without waiting to be recognized, calls out, "I second the motion."
5. The motion, having been made and seconded, is repeated by the chairperson "It has been moved and seconded that..."
6. When the chairperson has stated the motion, it is said to be pending. It may now be considered by the council; that is, it is open to discussion and debate.
7. Any member may now rise to agree or disagree with the proposal.
8. The chairperson inquires, "Is there any further discussion?" If none, the chairperson asks, "Are you ready for the question?" The response, "Question," is a parliamentary form that shows that the members are ready to vote.

9. Except where a special rule applies, a majority vote is usually required to pass a motion. The chairperson calls first for the votes in favor of a motion. A voice vote is most often used, although members may also be asked to show their hands, or stand. A standing vote is sometimes used to verify the results of a voice vote.

10. The chairperson then announces the vote: "The Ayes have it. The motion is carried." Or, "The No's have it. The motion is defeated."

For a more detailed discussion of parliamentary procedures, see Robert's Rules of Order, available in most libraries.

School Visit Record

Name _____

My Child's Name _____ Grade _____

Teacher I Visited _____ School _____

Date _____

Subject Being Taught _____

Time _____

Language of Instruction _____

My reactions	Agree				Disagree
1. Teacher was interested in children.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Teacher was well prepared.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Children were attentive.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Learning took place.	1	2	3	4	5
5. My child was participating and learning.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I feel I will be able to help my child at home more after my visit.	1	2	3	4	5

I would like to participate more in the bilingual program by:
(check all appropriate responses)

1. Helping as a school volunteer _____.
2. Joining the bilingual parent advisory council _____.
3. Tutoring students _____ subject _____.
4. Other _____ (please explain) _____

Parent's Signature _____

EVALUATING YOUR PARENT INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM

In order to improve your program, you should evaluate what you have done. Your evaluation should be both ongoing, to insure that as your program is developing you are on the "right track," as well as summative. The pre-post model will clearly determine overall growth through the year.

Your evaluation should be designed to answer the following questions:

- Did activities planned meet parents needs?
- Have parents increased their level of involvement?
- Did parents increase their knowledge of the bilingual program?
- Did parents have input in improving the program?
- Is there now, as a result of the parent involvement program, increased community support for the program?

The following questionnaires can help you in evaluating your program. Among these is a self-evaluation form for the parents which will both help you determine the parents' level of involvement (from their perception), and allow parents to determine whether or not they now have a greater sense of real participation in their children's education. These checklists were prepared by the Title I ESEA Office, U.S. Office of Education, and were printed in Working with Schools: A Parents' Handbook.

CHECKLIST: PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Personal Evaluation

1. Do I attend parent meetings?
2. Do I volunteer my services at my child's school?
3. Do I read newsletters and/or notes from the school?
4. Do I visit my child's classroom, other than at conference time?
5. Do I know if my school or school district has a parent advisory council (PAC)?
6. Have I attended a PAC meeting?
7. Do I discuss my child's school with:

   Other parents?

   My child's teacher?

   The principal?

   Other administrators?

8. Do I know what roles parents have in planning, carrying out, and reviewing the instructional program at my child's school?

9. Am I involved in such activities?

10. Do I know how to make a complaint about my child's school?

    Do I discuss the problem first with the person(s) most directly involved?

    If we cannot resolve the problem, do I talk with other appropriate school officials and/or parent groups?

School Policy

1. Are parents made to feel welcome in my child's school?

2. Is there a place set aside for parents to get together at the school?

3. How many parents are volunteers at the school?

4. What do they do?

5. Is there a Parent Teacher Organization or some organized parent group at the school?

6. How often does the group meet? When? Where?

7. Does the principal meet regularly with parents?

8. Are parents involved in planning and carrying out the school program?

9. How do teachers feel about parent involvement in the school?

10. Does the school employ a parent coordinator? Is there a staff member specificially responsible for parent contacts?

Evaluating Parent Advisory Councils

Membership

1. How many members are on the council?

2. How were they selected?

3. Are they representative of the parents in the district or school?

4. Are parents who are not members involved in council activities?

Meetings

1. Does the council have regularly scheduled meetings?

2. When? Where?

3. Are the meetings well publicized in advance and open to the public?

4. Do parents other than council members have an opportunity to speak at meetings?

5. Are council decisions and/or recommendations sent to all parents?

Training

1. Is there a training program for members of the parent advisory council?

2. What does it involve?

3. Do council members have basic information about the organizational structure of the local school district?

   Names and phone numbers of administrators?

   The basic curriculum in the district or school?

   Special programs that are available within the school(s)?

Activities

1. Is there a written statement of the responsibilities of the present advisory council?

2. Have both administrators and council members agreed to the statement?

3. Has the council been involved in the following activities?

   Identifying the needs of children in the school or district?

   Establishing a list of educational priorities?

   Reviewing proposals for new programs?

   Planning new programs or changes in existing programs?

   Reviewing textbooks and/or tests being considered for use in the school(s)?

   Evaluating school programs?

4. Does the council involve other parents in school activities?

5. Has the council established a complaint procedure for parents? Does the principal or superintendent agree with the procedure?

Support

1. Are funds available to cover parent council expenses, such as mailing, supply, and clerical costs?

2. Is space made available for meetings at times that are convenient to parents?

3. Do council members receive all the information they need to fulfill their responsibilites?

4. Does the principal (or superintendent) seriously consider the recommendations of the council?

5. Is there a staff member assigned as a liaison to the council?

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